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MEDITATIONS,

DAY BY DAY.

By Dr. Burgers of Delhom 184

"Thy Testimonies are my Meditations."



BOSTON:

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PREFACE.

been in the habit of writing daily a brief meditation on some passage of Holy Scripture. This he read, together with the chapter occurring in course, at domestic worship, morning or evening. He continued this practice, notwithstanding the serious injury a year since, which reduced his strength, and occasioned for a considerable part of the remaining eight months of his life severe pain.

These condensed suggestions were much prized by his family. A selection of specimen leaflets has been made,—the selection being from such devotional thoughts as were prepared during the last year of his life.

No idea was probably farther from Dr. Burgess' mind than that any use like the present one would be made of his somewhat confidential reflections and aspirations. They are not hereby published; they are simply handed in this form confidingly and affectionately to the church and congregation of which he was so long pastor.

His friends will please accept this little volume as a token of Christian regard from the one who expects at no distant day to follow him to the great family gathering and worship on high.

BROAD OAK, March, 1871.

"I WILL ADD UNTO THY DAYS FIFTEEN YEARS."

2 Kings xx. 6.

EZEKIAH was one of Judah's best kings, a patriot, a reformer, a true servant of God. Being sick of some fatal disease, he was admonished to set his house in order and prepare to die. He was smitten with alarm, being less than forty years old, and having only begun the work of life. He turned his face to the wall, prayed with importunity, and wept sore. God had compassion on him, and sent Isaiah with the promise, "I will add unto thy days fifteen years."

The year is the longest measure of time; nearly half of our race die under fifteen years, and the period of twice fifteen years is allotted to a generation.

How rich is this promise of an additional fifteen years! That, indeed, made him only

fifty-four years when he actually died. With diligence and zeal how much might he accomplish in that space of time; and yet how soon would it be past! Poor man, he was vain of his wealth and prosperity, and showed his treasures to the ambassadors of the king of Babylon, who were sent to congratulate him on his recovery from sickness. Such is our infirmity. There is no perfect sanctification to man on earth.

Who of us has any probable claim to fifteen years more? Would it not require a supernatural sign, like the return of the shadow ten degrees backward on the dial of Ahaz, to assure any one of us that he shall live fifteen years longer?

How just is the prayer, "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom"!

This is the first day of a New Year, and who can promise himself that he shall survive to see its last day? Step gently on the margin of another world.

II.

"ALL THE DAYS OF MY APPOINTED TIME WILL I WAIT,
TILL MY CHANGE COME. -- Job xiv. 14.

HE change in question, without dispute, is death. This change will come. It is appointed unto men once to die. There is no escape in this warfare. Early or late, in the ordinary course of nature, by disease, by accident, or by violence, every one must die. To this result we all tend, and to this end we must all arrive.

This change has an appointed time. The little sparrow falls not to the ground without our Father. Our birth and our death are the two great events in our earthly existence. The time, the place, and the circumstances are appointed in the decrees of our Father. Chance is excluded.

All the days of this appointed time each one should wait. Why? Because our Father has

numbered our days in his wisdom and goodness; because it is his will, and it is our duty.

How wait? Patiently in suffering, actively in obedience, hopefully in trust, — not in idleness, not in complaining, not in the belief that our usefulness is at an end, not in the wish that each day were the last.

Hence suicide, which is so common among an infidel people, is a great crime. It is a direct rebellion against God. It is throwing away his precious gift with contempt.

Waiting on God is a reverent posture. Thoughtful, prayerful, submissive, "not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." In weakness, in sickness, in pain, in want, wait on the Lord. What better can one do?

Even to wish that our life were at an end is very sinful. No, "all the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come."

"I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVETH, AND THAT HE SHALL STAND AT THE LATTER DAY UPON THE EARTH; AND THOUGH AFTER MY SKIN WORMS DESTROY THIS BODY, YET IN MY FLESH SHALL I SEE GOD; WHOM I SHALL SEE FOR MYSELF, AND MINE EYES SHALL BEHOLD, AND NOT ANOTHER." — JOB XIX. 25-27.

"The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." The promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent, stands early in the record; and the benediction, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all," is the conclusion of it. Why do we wish to blot out any reference to the great Redeemer in the beginning, the middle, or the end of the volume?

Job lived in the patriarchal age; if not so early as Abraham, yet not so late as Moses. Did Abraham anticipate with joy the day of the Messiah? and might not Job, in ecstatic vision, feel a similar impulse? No direct argument need be attempted in defence of this exposition, once generally embraced, now slowly admitted.

Abel understood the import of the sacrifices. Enoch walked with God, and predicted the Lord's final advent "with ten thousand of his saints." Noah was a prophet and a preacher of righteousness. Job, like Abraham, might almost have seen Shem, their ancestor, and might have been instructed in the knowledge of God and salvation, as transmitted from Adam, Enoch, and Noah. Why do we marvel, if he expressed strong faith in a future Redeemer, and in the blessedness of the saints in the resurrection state? The existence and providence of God, the immortality of the soul, the interposition of a Redeemer, the pardon of sin through the shedding of his blood, the resurrection of the dead, and the life everlasting, may well have been primary principles in the patriarchal religion.

Deep darkness did not becloud the world at once. Lessons of traditionary wisdom were transmitted from parents to children for many generations. Some relics survive, as in proverbs, in nearly every language.

"WHO IS AMONG YOU THAT FEARETH THE LORD, THAT
OBEYETH THE VOICE OF HIS SERVANT, THAT WALKETH
IN DARKNESS, AND HATH NO LIGHT? LET HIM TRUST
IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, AND STAY UPON HIS
GOD."—ISAIAH 1.10.

HO is he that "feareth the Lord and obeyeth the voice of his servant"? He is the reverent, conscientious, and religious man. He deprecates sin, the displeasure of God, the condemnation of the wicked. He attends to the voice of Christ, the great Teacher, the rightful Lord.

Such a one, however truly a good man, may walk in darkness and have no light. Doubt and anxiety are not peculiar to irreligious persons. He may have false views of truth or of himself. His depression of soul may originate in bad health or in the temptations of Satan. Dark clouds may overspread his mind or his path. He may have no settled hope, peace, or joy. He knows not

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what to do or which way to turn. Within or without, he is alike in trouble. Job was falsely accused, and considered himself cast out under the divine frown. The psalmist walked in darkness when he composed the strain, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?"

Accept the advice in this text. Trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon thy God. He is powerful to sustain thee in weakness, to comfort thee in sorrow, and bear thee up in every trial. Think how he has interposed for his servants in times past, — Joseph, Daniel, Paul, and others.

This is the way to secure peace of mind, to make the best use of the means of escape or deliverance which are within our reach, and to bear with patience the present burden.

Gloomy depression is no sure evidence against personal piety.

Do not think too much of doubt and sorrow. They may be occasioned by the poor body, weak, diseased, and dying.

"BE OF GOOD CHEER; IT IS I; BE NOT AFRAID."

MARK vi. 50.

HEN the humble repast was ended,
Jesus advised the disciples to cross the
lake, while he dismissed the multitude,
and withdrew to the mountain to pray. The
hours of night wasted away. The wind on
the lake was contrary. The disciples toiled
hard in rowing. The fourth watch had arrived, and the morning soon must dawn.
Jesus made his appearance walking on the
sea, and seemed to be passing by. They were
troubled, supposing it to be some spectre, and
cried out with fear. Jesus spoke to them for
their comfort, and said, "Be of good cheer;
it is I; be not afraid."

Thanks to thee, thou compassionate One! When in hunger or in danger, when on the stormy sea or on the dry land, thou art near to thy servants. The wind abates, the waves subside, the danger is past. How peaceful is the voice, "It is I; be not afraid"!

"It is I,"—in my watchful providence, in my divine power, in my tender love.

"Be not afraid" of any rude wind, of any swelling wave, any nightly vision. "Be of good cheer" in my presence, within the sound of my voice, in memory of my miracles.

He has made promises; He is faithful and true. Read his assurances in the letters to the seven churches.

Row on, ye weary mariners; the sea is not boundless, the night is not endless; in the prayer on the mountain ye were not forgotten. Has the Master sent you on this voyage? Be not alarmed or discouraged. Neither the tempest nor the vision shall do you harm.

VI.

"LIKEWISE, I SAY UNTO YOU, THERE IS JOY IN THE PRESENCE OF THE ANGELS OF GOD OVER ONE SINNER THAT REPENTETH." — LUKE XV. 10.

HE angels of God are those heavenly hosts who have never apostatized from his service. They feel a sympathy for fallen men, who in their impenitence are condemned to perdition. They understand the gospel of reconciliation, adore the great Redeemer, and administer to the heirs of salvation.

Why do they rejoice over the repenting sinner? They are benevolent, and take delight to see other beings happy as themselves. When a sinner repents, a soul is saved, Christ is honored, the law is established, the grace of God is displayed, the strain of praise is sung. The difference is infinite between the salvation and perdition of a sinner. The reason, then, for the joy of the holy angels is incomprehensible and unutterable.

Think how numberless are the blessed angels. Think how great is the change when a sinner repents. Think what joy flows through the myriads of the angelic hosts when a sinner is delivered from the dominion of sin, and the gulf of ruin, and clothed in the robes of innocence and beauty. If the penitent himself is happy, and all the saints on earth participate with him in the blessedness, what shall be said of the angels, who are perfectly benevolent?

In what a work are the Lord's ministers engaged, who endeavor to seize the brands from the burning! "He that converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death and hide a multitude of sins." "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever."

Blow the trumpet, watch to win souls to Christ, be faithful unto death.

VII.

"LORD, REMEMBER ME WHEN THOU COMEST INTO THY KINGDOM." — LUKE xxiii, 42.

HIS penitent malefactor, a condemned sinner in his own sight, believed that Jesus was not an impostor nor a liar, but a truthful and exalted personage, the Messiah of the prophets, the promised King of Israel. What had been his education. how extended was his knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures, how accurate was his faith in the Messiah, we do not know; but that he became a true and approved disciple, we have the best evidence. Christ said, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." Consoling assurance to a dying penitent. We are to presume, then, that the spirit of his heart was in harmony with all that his words import.

Let us, then, con over his words. "Lord":

this is a title of reverence, expressive of authority or power, whether as a teacher, a legislator or a prince, and not a man only. "Remember me": do not forget or forsake me, show me favor, let me be the object of thy compassion and mercy. "When thou comest into thy kingdom." He believed that Christ would come again, not in the weakness and suffering of a man, but in the exaltation and power of the Son of God. What a stretch of faith was this!

Jesus was now suspended on the cross, in the dying struggle, as a frail man. But this was not to be the end. There was a resurrection on the third day foretold. There was an exaltation to the throne of glory predicted. His return would be attended with hosts of angels. Majesty and splendor would mark that scene.

The penitent malefactor did not despair that he should be remembered with favor in that great day, and participate in the blessedness of the Messiah's reign.

VIII.

"JESUS SAID UNTO THE TWELVE, WILL YE ALSO GO AWAY? THEN SIMON PETER ANSWERED HIM, LORD, TO WHOM SHALL WE GO? THOU HAST THE WORDS OF ETERNAL LIFE." — JOHN vi. 67, 68.

ANY were offended with Christ's preaching, believed not, and went away to follow him no more. In grief and regret Jesus turned to the chosen twelve,—"Will ye also go away?"

Such is the question in every age. Some go away disappointed in ambition,—no wealth, no official rank, no earthly honor being promised. Some go away offended with His sublime doctrines or holy precepts; some displeased with the humility, self-abasement and self-denial which His religion requires; some because the conditions of mercy and salvation make no allowance of merit to legal works and offerings.

"Will ye also go away?" We are some-

times tempted to do so. The example or persuasion of friends, the necessity of watchfulness, our imperfect sanctity, may turn us aside. No. We will say with Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

His gospel is true. It bears the internal and external evidences of its divine origin. Miracles attend it. The prophecies were fulfilled in Him. Harmony and sublimity characterize His doctrines. Holiness is stamped on His precepts. His religion pervades the soul, to awaken its powers, to purify its affections, to inspire peace, hope, and joy.

This gospel vindicates its character in its influence on the world, wherever it is published.

Jesus is the only Saviour. "There is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." "Thou hast the words of eternal life." These teach the true system of doctrine, exhibit the purest motives, warn of danger, inspire with hope.

"ONE THING I KNOW, THAT WHEREAS I WAS BLIND, NOW I SEE." — John ix. 25.

ATURAL blindness is a sad calamity, not often relieved by human skill. Jesus, the light of the world, was the healer of the blind. This form of miracle was characteristic. "The blind receive their sight." When the Pharisees cast reproach on Christ, the man who had been blind from his infancy, said, "Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not; one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." Apply this to spiritual blindness.

Many things one may not know; but he finds himself a sinner, ignorant, guilty, and lost. He has no doubt of his miserable and condemned state. He cannot effect his own salvation by bribing or penance, by tears or prayers. No human surgery can effect his cure. He does not understand the doctrines of grace, or comprehend the mystery of the

incarnation, or know how the Spirit acts upon his heart to convince and illuminate, or how the sufferings of Christ can avail to his pardon.

But he knows that he is blind.

So, when his spiritual blindness is removed, he is conscious of the marvellous change. But when or how this transition occurred, he cannot tell. He was asleep, and is now awake; he was dead, and is now alive; he was blind, and he now sees. Of the two states of being he is sure; but the thousand things which fill up the intervening space are a mystery to himself. No matter. "Known unto God are all his works." Let that suffice. Whatever is essential to our duty or salvation, we may know; and the vast residue may be postponed to a future eternity. We may safely wait, until our powers expand, or a more brilliant light dawn upon our souls.

It is well if we know that we now see. Let us exercise and employ our new vision to sublime purposes, to honor God and serve our fellow-men. "WHEN WE WERE YET WITHOUT STRENGTH, IN DUE TIME
CHRIST DIED FOR THE UNGODLY." — ROMANS V. 6-

HE "ungodly," or unlike to God, include all men while in their unregenerate state, being children of wrath, and under the dominion of the carnal mind, which is enmity against God, and not subject to his law. This accords with the text, "He died for all." "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." If any of our race were never ungodly, or under condemnation as sinners, they need not, and cannot, have any participation in the death of Christ.

The ungodly are "without strength" to resist temptation, or to accomplish their own deliverance from perdition. They cannot work out a righteousness of their own, or make any expiation for past sin. They cannot buy salvation with money, or merit it by

works or penance, prayers or tears. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." "By whom we have now received the atonement."

"In due time," "in the fulness of time," at the time designated by many prophecies, and now recorded in authentic history, the Messiah made his advent to this earth, and "died for the ungodly." No historical fact is better attested than the death of Christ. The time, the place, and the manner, are well defined.

"Christ died for the ungodly." In their stead, as their representative, for their redemption, he died. The dignity of his rank and the excellence of his character gave to his death an incomparable value. "He died for all." God is now in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.

Marvellous doctrine! Who but God can declare his own eternal decrees and counsels? Let us consider and adore.

XI.

"HE THAT SPARED NOT HIS OWN SON, BUT DELIVERED HIM UP FOR US ALL, HOW SHALL HE NOT WITH HIM ALSO FREELY GIVE US ALL THINGS?" — ROMANS VIII. 32.

HE whole ensures each part, and the greater gift is a pledge for the less. This is always considered a valid argument. Has God in love given us his Son? his Son to die for us? to die for us all? for us all while we were yet sinners? Is there any greater gift possible? Are all other gifts little in comparison? "How then shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Such is the argument.

Has he given his Son for our lost world, to die for our redemption? Dwell upon it. How unspeakable the gift! Read, hear, believe, and live. It offers pardon and salvation.

What other things are wanted? They are many, comparatively great, most urgent.

We cannot merit them, we cannot buy them with money, created beings cannot bestow them. We may search heaven and earth in vain.

But we may say, "Has God given us his Son? How shall he not with him freely give us all things?" Life and health, food and apparel, house and home,—how few and small are these in comparison!

Have we appropriated to ourselves the blessings included in the gift of the Son, so boundless, so endless, so unfading?

Away with anxiety as to what we shall eat, or wherewithal we shall be clothed.

How triumphant is the strain of the apostle! It may often be read and not exhausted.

What a source of consolation is the blessed gospel amid the trials of life and in death!

XII.

"BE NOT CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD." - ROMANS xii. 2.

HIS world has principles of faith, false and injurious; a spirit, selfish, mercenary, unholy; rules of conduct, unjust, impure; customs and maxims, barbarous, profane, unreasonable,—war, oppression, sensuality, idolatry, polygamy, slavery. This is a wicked world, full of vice and crime, in rebellion against God, and at strife one with another.

To this world be not conformed; be not like it, do not resemble it.

Do not believe its false doctrines. Do not breathe its selfish and perverse spirit. Do not imitate its bad example. Do not adopt its wrong maxims and rules of conduct. Do not plunge into its vices and crimes. Go not with the multitude to do evil.

Wash the hands in innocency and come

around the altar of God in daily worship. Be renewed in your mind, and learn in experience the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God, which is your reasonable service. Offer yourselves to God, a living sacrifice, holy and well pleasing in his sight.

Let the goodness of God lead you to repentance. The Saviour has died for your redemption. The daily blessings of Providence should enkindle gratitude.

Be admonished to flee from impending wrath. Christian friends invite; angels administer to the heirs of salvation; heaven throws open its doors. Hear the voice of love.

XIII.

"OUR LIGHT AFFLICTION, WHICH IS BUT FOR A MOMENT,
WORKETH FOR US A FAR MORE EXCEEDING AND ETERNAL WEIGHT OF GLORY." — 2 COMMINIANS IV. 17.

FFLICTION," — pain of body, sorrow of soul, trouble and want, siekness and death. All affliction of the righteous man has two characteristics, — it is comparatively light; it can endure but for a moment. Such is the estimate of faith. Such is the teaching of God. Affliction belongs to the body, not to the soul; to time, not to eternity; to this disciplinary state, not to the retributive reward.

"It worketh;" it produces, when sanctified, the peaceable fruit of righteousness. The reward is precious. It is a glory, a weight of glory, exceeding rich and eternal. See the contrast. The affliction is for a moment: the reward is eternal; that is light,

this is an incomprehensible weight of glory. The one is connected with the other; no cross, no crown; no affliction for Christ, no blessedness or glory with him.

Not that affliction is the only ground of reward, or the only means to work out glory. There are labors, no less than sufferings; fidelity no less than patience; watchfulness no less than prayer. "Give all diligence; add to your faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity."

But we magnify present affliction. We wish for reward without labor. We feel the present pain and have little faith in the future joy. The affliction bears us down, and no assurance of immortal bliss sustains the soul. When will the night be past and the endless day dawn?

Thanks be to God, who gives to his people the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil!

XIV.

"THEY THAT ARE CHRIST'S HAVE CRUCIFIED THE FLESH
WITH THE AFFECTIONS AND LUSTS." — GALATIANS v. 24.

HE flesh often means the body of man, with its organs and members. Often it means the soul in its unregenerate and unsanctified state. To be crucified is to be put to death, as on the cross, — a painful, disgraceful, lingering, yet certain mode of death.

It is a bold figure of speech to speak of crucifying the affections and lusts of the soul considered as sensual and unholy.

What does it mean? Plainly, to restrain, subdue, or utterly exterminate them. These are enumerated in a preceding sentence. "The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these,—adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness,

revellings, and such like." "They who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." But "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."

All this is intelligible and explicit. We see what are the affections and lusts of the flesh. We are assured that these are subdued, put to death, as it were, by crucifixion, by all who are or become the disciples and servants of Christ. Such is the nature and import of regeneration,— the spiritual and voluntary change in sinners when they are adopted into the family of Christ,— without which change they could not inherit the kingdom of God.

Here is a criterion by which we may judge whether we are Christians. Some or all the works of the flesh may be seen in the people of the world. These are crucified in the servants of Christ.

Who and what are we? Are we crucified to the world and to the affections and lusts of the flesh?

XV.

"ACCORDING AS HE HATH CHOSEN US IN HIM BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD, THAT WE SHOULD BE HOLY, AND WITHOUT BLAME BEFORE HIM IN LOVE: HAVING PREDESTINATED US UNTO THE ADOPTION OF CHILDREN BY JESUS CHRIST TO HIMSELF, ACCORDING TO THE GOOD PLEASURE OF HIS WILL." — EPHESIANS 1.4,5.

LECTION is an act of God, — personal, gracious, sovereign, eternal, — choosing some from others. It contemplates all men in sin and misery, justly condemned and exposed to perdition.

To what are they chosen? To salvation as the end, — to sanctification and blamelessness as the means, — in Christ as the Redeemer and atoning Saviour. They become adopted children of God, sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty.

Election, or predestination, is not an insulated, abstract doctrine, but a part of the great system of divine truth or revealed religion.

It is a doctrine of grace, a sublime act of

mercy. Christ was not to die in vain. He was to redeem a people. These were given to him as the price of his humiliation and death. They are not few in number, but an uncounted assemblage. They are not of one age, race, or land alone, but of every kindred, tongue, and nation.

It is an assurance of mercy to the penitent and believing. What other ground of hope is so consoling? If left to themselves will any sinners change their hearts and forsake their sins? Name a solitary instance. Here, then, is our encouragement to labor, preach, and pray for the conversion of sinners. God has revealed his purpose in respect to the salvation of a people. He will accomplish his purpose.

Why do we hate and oppose this doctrine? Because we know that we are sinners, and we have no heart to seek reconciliation with God. We hate to think that others may be saved, and we be lost. We charge God with partiality.

XVI.

"WHO IS GONE INTO HEAVEN, AND IS ON THE RIGHT HAND
OF GOD; ANGELS AND AUTHORITIES AND POWERS BEING
MADE SUBJECT UNTO HIM." — 1 PETER III. 22.

Abel, Enoch, and Noah, patriarchs and prophets, have gone into heaven; but it is not said of any one of them that he sits or stands on the right hand of God. That is the position of honor or supreme exaltation, to which no created being is entitled or can justly aspire. This is often repeated in simple and positive words which cannot be explained away. Nor is this all.

"Angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him." It is assumed that angels are superior to men in rank, in knowledge, in all intellectual and moral excellence. Angels are designated as the cherubim and seraphim. The "authorities and powers" may indicate a diversity in rank among these

superior beings. They are ten thousand times ten thousand in number. But however many, and however exalted, they are all in subjection to Jesus Christ. "Let all the angels of God worship him." "To which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool?" In rank and dominion he is infinitely superior to all angels and to all men. What do we mean, if we withhold the homage of our heart? Oh, let us not be found among rebel angels and infidel men, cast out from heaven!

Do we delight to contemplate our Messiah in his exalted state, or do we murmur? We are overwhelmed, and cannot fully comprehend. We may surely bow in subjection with the blessed angels, authorities, and powers.

How unworthy a notion is the simple humanity of Christ,—a perfect man, an inspired teacher! No prince, no Lord, no Redeemer!

XVII.

"I AM ALPHA AND OMEGA, THE BEGINNING AND THE END-ING, SAITH THE LORD, WHICH IS, AND WHICH WAS, AND WHICH IS TO COME, THE ALMIGHTY." — REVELATION I. 8.

OME divine attributes are admitted by all to be incapable of creation, change, or transfer. Thus infinity is exclusive. Eternity cannot have beginning or end. Omnipresence, or omniscience, admits of no limitation. Almighty power cannot be invested in a finite or dependent creature. The supposition is absurd. This is not a point of speculation, but a primary truth.

Here, now, is a Person or Being, who claims to have been the first of all that exist, as Alpha is the first letter in the Greek alphabet; and in harmony with this, that he is the last, the Omega, of all that will ever exist; not that He is superior in excellence or value to all other created things, or that they were created by or for Him, but that He truly exists from eternity to eternity. This attribute of

eternity is incapable of creation or transfer. He claims another attribute, which is immutability, or unchangeableness. "Who is, and who was, and who is to come," or who will be hereafter, that is, the same Person or Being, yesterday, to-day, and forever. One other incommunicable attribute is claimed in this short sentence, which is almighty power. To create an almighty creature is presumptuous language. Here, then, is a false claim, or this Person speaking in the Revelation to John is truly divine. The former we dare not assert; the latter we must believe to be true.

Thus His moral integrity is involved. He is what He claimed to be, or He was an impostor. We do not presume to implicate His integrity, and are, therefore, shut up to the faith.

We may say, how can this be? We are to learn, not to teach; we are to believe, and not to explain the infinite things of God.

Let us adore Him, who is the First and the Last, the Almighty One.

XVIII.

"I AM THIS DAY FOURSCORE YEARS OLD."
II SAM. xix. 35.

UCH is the writer. How can I believe it?
Until my sad disaster, fifteen days ago,
I was active and vigorous, in the possession of all my senses and faculties, especially my sight. In the mercy of God, no bone was broken, nor are my pains so acute and constant as I might have anticipated. After some months of infirmity, I hope to walk abroad again, and visit the house of prayer.

Review: Eighty years, with Bible and Sabbath, kindred and friends. A visible disciple for sixty-two years, and for so many years permitted to preach the blessed gospel. How many were those sermons, how many those public prayers! All were beset with infirmity, all were attended with guiltiness. Yet, I have the testimony of my conscience, that I was honest, sincere, and devoted. I

endeavored to preach the gospel, fearless of man, and in simplicity towards God.

Present state: Prostrate in body, dull and shattered in mind; thankful for many escapes from death; tranquil, not often overwhelmed, not often anxious, not desponding, yet strangely dull in prayer. Have mercy, O God, have mercy! Let me not slumber at the door of death.

Future prospect: Physical and moral infirmity in advancing age. I am the last in my father's family; yet my friends are many. My pecuniary contributions, if moderate, are widely spread, punctual, and cheerful. For my blessed children and grandchildren I cannot render to God sufficient thanks.

What remains on earth? A few years, at most, few words or works, few changes, few joys or sorrows. Inspire me, O God, with thy fear and love! Give me to see the peace and prosperity of thy Zion. Farewell.

XIX.

"LORD, MAKE ME TO KNOW MY END, AND THE MEASURE OF
MY DAYS, WHAT IT IS, THAT I MAY KNOW HOW FRAIL I
AM."—PSALM XXXIX. 4.

WO characteristics of this present existence are assumed, brevity and frailty. It will have an end, or a measured time; nor is this reckoned by centuries but by days only. Its brevity is a sure evidence of its frailty, and the prayer is that God will impress on the psalmist's mind a just sense of the brevity and frailty of his life. "All men think all men mortal but themselves." "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

A speculative knowledge of our mortality is one thing; a practical conviction of it is another. We see others dying, often when young, with little premonition, and without much apparent cause.

God alone knows how long each one shall live, and when and by what means each one shall die. The place and the circumstances, the disease or the disaster, are alike ordained. No man or angel can turn over the pages in the volume of futurity.

It is well, then, that this prayer should be made to the omniscient God. It is not that he would reveal to each one of us the year, day, or hour of our death. He could do this if it were wise or expedient. But the prayer is, that he would so affect our mind with the certainty and nearness of our death, that we may apply ourselves to penitence for sin, to holy living, and to a diligent and habitual preparation to give up our final account with peace, hope, and joy.

Do we thus pray? Do we act accordingly? Let us not be sure of long life or future years.

XX.

"CREATE IN ME A CLEAN HEART, O GOD, AND RENEW A RIGHT SPIRIT WITHIN ME." — PSALM II. 10.

EDUPLICATION is a primary characteristic of Hebrew poetry. The second clause of the verse is essentially of the same import with the first. Ascertain the meaning of one, and you can explain the other. Learn what it is to "create a clean heart," and you then know what it is to "renew a right spirit." Must a clean heart be created? Yes. The old or natural heart is filthy or unclean. Must a right spirit be renewed? Yes. The unrenewed spirit is a wrong or bad one. The heart and spirit are the same,—the clean heart and right spirit are the same.

The heart by nature is not clean, nor is the spirit right. This applies to every child of fallen Adam. The work of moral cleansing

of the heart is necessary. The renewal of the heart makes it right.

This renewal or cleansing is a divine work. It is not baptism with water; nor is it an outward reform only. If it is a divine act, the power and grace of the Spirit should be reverently confessed. No one can claim the honor to himself, nor is it to be ascribed to the teacher or preacher.

If it is a divine act, it is eminently a proper subject of prayer. The psalmist thought so: "Create in me a clean heart, O God." Prayers to God should be intermingled with our holy instructions. The praise of the sinner's renewal should be devoutly ascribed to God.

The conversion of a sinner is a great change,

— a new creation.

XXI.

"SORROW IS BETTER THAN LAUGHTER." - ECCLESIASTES vii. 3.

AUGHTER" is light or trifling in its origin, in its tendency, in its results. It does not exercise the intellectual or moral powers, nor mould the character to knowledge and virtue; not wrong in itself, it often begins and ends like "the crackling of thorns under a pot."

"Sorrow" has just occasions in this world of sin. It is a result of sin, a correction for sin, and it is one means of restraining from sin. Sorrow is always painful in itself. See how we wipe away tears, how we shun the house of mourning, and how we dislike the face of sadness. Sorrow is favorable to reflection, and moves to penitence for sin. "It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting; for that is the

end of all men, and the living will lay it to his heart."

Sorrow reminds us that we are sinners; it is associated with suffering; it is allied to sickness and death; it convinces each one of his dependence on God; it leads one to pray, to make confession, and to implore mercy. Sober thought, religious duty, and a preparation for an exchange of worlds lie in the pathway of sorrow.

Sorrow may be morbid or excessive, impairing physical health and unfitting us for active duty. But if the remarks above are correct, sorrow is like divine discipline or parental chastisement, wise and salutary, a means of good to the soul, not to be deprecated but to be improved.

Jesus was a man of sorrow.

Has sorrow fallen to our lot? Let us not sink under it.

Let the children of mirth and pleasure pause for reflection.

XXII.

"BECAUSE SENTENCE AGAINST AN EVIL WORK IS NOT EX-ECUTED SPEEDILY, THEREFORE THE HEART OF THE SONS OF MEN IS FULLY SET IN THEM TO DO EVIL."— ECCLESIASTES VIII. 11.

N evil work is subject to a "sentence" or punishment from God and from men. But God, in his forbearance and tender compassion, often suspends the execution of the sentence. He waits to try means; his goodness is designed to lead to repentance.

This forbearance is often abused. One says, My sin is not great, as the event proves; my life is spared, and many blessings attend me. Another says, God does not intend to punish; his law is held up in terror, but its dreadful sentence is not executed. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the

children of men is fully set in them to do evil."

Human depravity is inveterate and universal. The doctrine of the great adversary of man has always been, "Thou shalt not surely die."

The temporary suspension of punishment deludes the sinner with the vain hope that the sentence will never be executed.

This suggests that crimes under civil government should be punished surely and speedily.

Under the divine government there is no call for haste. This life is for discipline and probationary trial. Eternity will give ample opportunity to execute the sentence against the evil work.

O sinner, "prepare to meet thy God!"

XXIII.

"MY COUNSEL SHALL STAND, AND I WILL DO ALL MY
PLEASURE." — ISAIAH xlvi. 9.

OD has a counsel or system of counsels. These constitute his plan, or design, or good pleasure, in the creation, government and disposal of all persons and things. These counsels, designs, purposes, or decrees are eternal and immutable, universal; wise, stable, and benevolent; universal, particular, and eminently his own. Joy to the world, Jehovah reigns. Neither wicked men nor apostate angels will be suffered to triumph. With infinite authority and truthfulness he says, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."

In proof that he has a counsel, think of his rational agency, think of his perfect knowledge of his own works, think of his revealed purposes and their exact accomplishment. These purposes were his own, as there were none to consult with; eternal, as they were

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formed before they could be executed; benevolent, as such were his nature and law; particular and universal, or he might be defeated in the execution of them. In further proof, the Bible is very explicit; the wisest and best men, whether heathen or Christian, ascribe them to God; common sense assents to what the Bible declares; and the whole system of prophecy is founded on this great principle. Hence,—

- 1. There is no chance. It is absurd to suppose it.
- 2. There is no collision between divine agency and human agency. We are conscious of the most perfect liberty of choice, and yet God rules in heaven and on earth.
- 3. All rational agents are voluntary and responsible. We are conscious of good or ill desert, and our sovereign Lord will one day reward or punish us according to our works.
- 4. The ordinary objections to the purposes or decrees of God flow from our proud, selfish, and rebellious spirit.

XXIV.

"AND IN THE MORNING, RISING UP A GREAT WHILE BE-FORE DAY, HE WENT OUT AND DEPARTED INTO A SOLITARY PLACE, AND THERE PRAYED." — MARK I. 35.

HE place was solitary, away from any city, or dense village, or public way, secluded from bustle or company, from business or sport. Whether a lofty mountain or a retired valley, it may differ little.

The hour was the morning, even a great while before the dawn. What was the duty? It was prayer; "There he prayed." Here was an example. There was no display, no ostentation, no company. Ah, what was his prayer? He had no sins to confess, no pardon to implore, few wants to supply. What evils did he deprecate, what enemies did he fear? We may be sure that his prayers did not concentrate chiefly on himself. We may think of the brief outline of prayer, "Our

Father," etc.; we may think of the strain of prayer, when the disciples were so affected that they said, "Lord, teach us to pray." And we think of the ejaculations in the garden and on the cross. He prayed for himself as a man, and in respect to his whole work as our Redeemer, tempted of Satan, despised and rejected of men, with no shelter or daily bread; insulted, reproached, profanely treated, falsely accused.

Do we pray, daily, at regular hours? Do we sometimes rise by night for prayer? How mistaken are they who cast off fear and restrain prayer, — proud, conceited, blaspheming!

What an example have we in our blessed Lord!

XXV.

"FEAR NOT, LITTLE FLOCK; FOR IT IS YOUR FATHER'S GOOD PLEASURE TO GIVE YOU THE KINGDOM."—LUKE xii. 32.

WEET words, flowing from the Saviour's lips! They were few, poor, afflicted, and persecuted. The Master had premonished them to expect trouble and hatred, imprisonment, and a death by violence. They might naturally be affected with fear. No, said the teacher: "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

As they were to suffer tribulation in this world, "the kingdom" promised in the text must include the blessedness of a future life, when the victory is attained, every enemy subdued, and every conflict ended. It is not a mansion, a house, an inheritance, but a

kingdom, that is promised. Banish every doubt. The truth is spoken.

The Father has revealed his benevolent purpose, his sovereign good pleasure. This victory depends not on numbers, or human power, or wealth, or apparent probability. He who rules the heaven and the earth will accomplish his own designs.

Be not afraid. What if ye are few, or weak, or despised? What if ye, as individuals, will fall under the dominion of the wicked? Fear not them that kill the body; it is all that they can do.

The flock of the good Shepherd when he was on earth was a little one. Such has been its relative position. One day he will have the heathen for his inheritance. It is the Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom to his people for his own glory and for their salvation. Let them not fear. Be strong in faith. Be of good courage.

XXVI.

"AND THEY SAID ONE TO ANOTHER, DID NOT OUR HEART BURN WITHIN US, WHILE HE TALKED WITH US BY THE WAY, AND WHILE HE OPENED TO US THE SCRIPTURES?" — LUKE XXIV. 32.

HIS is the reflection of the two disciples, into whose company Jesus fell as they walked to Emmaus. They were absorbed in meditation, and he was not recognized. He reproved their unbelief, and expounded to them the Scriptures in respect to himself from Moses to the end of the prophets. As he asked a blessing at the table, they perceived who he was. They were surprised at their own stupidity, and, in looking back on their walk, they said to each other, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?"

They had often read their Scriptures with

little emotion, and with little application of them to the Messiah. Now their heart burns with warm affections of love, gratitude, and praise. They had been dull of apprehension. Now they enter into the import of the words, and comprehend why Christ must suffer death and ascend to his seat in glory. They could not sleep in Emmaus, but after a short refreshment they returned to Jerusalem to tell their fellow-disciples that the Lord was surely risen from the dead.

If we are truly Christian believers, there is much in the Scriptures of the Old Testament which will move our inmost soul. Are we insensible to any such emotions? What fools are we, and how slow to believe the words of the prophets!

How much do we all need a spiritual illumination while we read the Scriptures! The Bible is dark to the infidel and disobedient. May Christ be our teacher, and our heart will burn within us.

XXVII.

"VERILY, VERILY, I SAY UNTO THEE, EXCEPT A MAN BE BORN AGAIN, HE CANNOT SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD," — John III. 3.

INGDOM of God, or the godly kingdom, is that which Christ came to introduce and establish, — even the reign of holiness and truth. "To see" it is to receive and approve it, to enter into it, and participate in its blessedness.

The words "be born again," and the assurance that no man can see this spiritual kingdom who is not born again, require a careful exposition. By a comparison of several sentences of Scripture, we shall find that the change implied in regeneration, or a new birth, is represented as a translation from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of God, a transition from darkness to light, a conversion, a repentance, a new creation. It is a moral

and not a physical change; a renewal of the heart, and not a reform in external manners.

The assurance that an essential change in the heart is necessary to any man, that he may appreciate and enjoy the blessedness of this kingdom, is founded in reasons fully known to God, but not beyond our apprehension. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." But no man is holy in his unregenerate state, nor does he see the intrinsic excellence of holiness, nor feel the imperative obligation to be holy. He cannot obtain pardon until he is reclaimed; nor gain admission into Christ's kingdom, nor taste the blessedness of heaven, nor join the society of the sanctified, nor engage in their employments. Let the sinner be created anew, be inspired with holy affections, be sprinkled with the blood of atonement, and be enlightened in divine truth, and he may then be admitted to the heavenly kingdom.

"Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." Pray for the Spirit's power to subdue and renew the soul.

XXVIII.

"HE THAT HEARETH MY WORD, AND BELIEVETH ON HIM
THAT SENT ME, HATH EVERLASTING LIFE, AND SHALL
NOT COME INTO CONDEMNATION; BUT IS PASSED
FROM DEATH UNTO LIFE." — JOHN v. 24.

NE who is under sentence of death for a capital offence is called "a dead man." He is so in relation to the law, as to the farther enjoyments of life, liberty, or the rights of citizenship. But if he is forgiven for this crime, he is passed from death unto life, that is, from the state of a dead man, or under sentence of death, to the state of a living man. How forcible and just is this in its application to the forgiven sinner! He is passed from everlasting death to everlasting life, and "shall not again come into condemnation."

"He that heareth my word." This is not simply to hear with the natural ear. It is to attend with diligence, to accept divine instruction, and to obey with filial reverence. To such an one the Bible becomes his law-book, and the ordinances of worship a source of consolation.

"And believeth on Him that sent me." The divine mission of Christ is essential to our system of faith. He is the Son of God, the Messenger of God, our Messiah, Redeemer, and Judge. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." The existence and moral government of God stand in connection with the mission of our Saviour, and the assignment to him of a definite work. A true faith in God, and a humble trust in Christ, as our only Redeemer, with penitence for sin, are the essential terms of our forgiveness. In the exercise of these affections we pass from death to life, from despair to hope, from condemnation to salvation.

Are we the subjects of this great and happy transition? Were we dead, and are we alive? Shall we not again come into condemnation?

XXIX.

"YE WILL NOT COME TO ME THAT YE MIGHT HAVE
LIFE." — JOHN v. 40.

IFE" is a holy and happy existence in the favor of God; the pardon of sin through the interposition of the Redeemer; the salvation of the soul by a spiritual union to Christ.

They have life who truly come to Christ. What or how much is included in this coming to Christ? He was a teacher, and one must confide in his doctrines. He was perfect in moral excellence, and we must imitate his example. He made atonement for sin, and we must approve this mode of reconciliation. He explained and enforced the law, and we must render a sincere obedience to his authority. He was a man of prayer, and we must worship God in sincerity of heart. Such are the elements of a true coming to Christ.

But some will not come to him. Their unbelief and practical impiety show it. He declares it. Many to whom he preached did not believe or obey. Some despised his person, some blasphemed his name. They did not accept his mediation, or look for mercy through the shedding of his blood. The Jews scoffed, the Greeks blasphemed. Some took up stones, and some exclaimed, Crucify! The gospel is now published; but many do not believe and approve. They care not for life, or they wish for it on their own conditions, — by merit, or by reward for service. They give money or make pilgrimages, or do penance, or multiply prayers.

How sad is it that while the richest blessings are offered, they are not appreciated! Salvation is made easy, but it avails not. See the necessity of the Spirit's work. Ye who have come to Christ, invite others.

XXX.

"WHO WENT ABOUT DOING GOOD." - ACTS x. 38.

OUR adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour. So different are the spirit and agency of these two persons, Jesus of Nazareth and the devil. The one is benevolent, the other is malicious; one is doing good, the other is seeking to destroy. Both are active, and both are invested with great powers.

How did Jesus do good in his missionary excursions on earth? He did good by his true and faithful preaching. In conversation, in question and answer, in the lucid exposition of Scripture, he gave instruction to the people. In the house and by the way, in the boat and in the temple, his doctrine did drop as the rain, and his speech distil as the dew.

He did good by his holy example. By his benignant spirit and peaceful deportment and humble prayers, he led men into an alliance with God.

He did good by his miracles of power and compassion. How many thousands did he heal of painful infirmity and disease,—the leprous, the lunatie, the paralytic, the blind and the lame! How many thousands did he feed when hungry! What compassion to the bereaved widow, to the weeping father, to the mourning sisters! He calmed the troubled sea; he entrusted the solitary mother to the care of the beloved disciple.

He went about doing these good things with wisdom, self-denial, and perseverance. When he had finished his work of humiliation and suffering, he left our earth behind.

How instructive is it to follow our blessed Lord in his pilgrimage from the manger to the tomb!

Not riches, or power, or honor was his idol. "He went about doing good."

XXXI.

"BY THE DEEDS OF THE LAW, THERE SHALL NO FLESH
BE JUSTIFIED IN HIS SIGHT, FOR BY THE LAW IS THE
KNOWLEDGE OF SIN." — ROMANS III. 30.

O flesh "means no man, no one of Adam's race. "The law" is the standard of moral duty, the declaration of the divine will. "The deeds of the law" mean works of obedience and charity, as alms, visible worship, and the like. "To be justified" in the sight of God is to be approved, acquitted, declared innocent of fault or crime. The law convinces of sin, condemns for sin, gives a knowledge of the number and aggravated guilt of our sins.

With this notice of the import of the words in the text, how does it appear that no man will ever stand approved before God by the deeds of the law? Chiefly, because every man is a transgressor of the law. "There is

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not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not;" as a sinner, he is under the sentence of condemnation. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Thus the argument is a short one. Atonement or reparation is impossible. The sentence stands against the sinner. No tears of penitence can wash out the record. No prayers or future works can supply the defects of past sin and folly.

Yet many, like the formal Pharisees, think to make many prayers, to fast often, and to do good works, and thus to make amends for waste of time and neglect of duty. Some by penance, and some by liberal bequests, think to purchase the favor of God. No. "By the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight."

Merit is impossible. Works of supercrogation are wholly delusive.

Salvation is by grace alone; through faith in Christ.

XXXII.

"THE SPIRIT ITSELF BEARETH WITNESS WITH OUR SPIRIT
THAT WE ARE THE CHILDREN OF GOD." — ROMANS viii. 16.

HE Spirit, the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, the Sanctifier of the Saints, who, in the personal absence of Christ, dwells in the church to convince and regenerate sinners, to instruct and sanctify the saints.

What is his witness? He distributes supernatural gifts, — tongues, healings, casting out devils. These, however, are not intended in the text. This witness is internal, grace in the soul, faith, love, peace, hope, joy. Such are the works of the Spirit. The saints are conscious of these affections, which are not natural to them. These are in harmony with the best exercises of the soul, and confirm in believers the hope that they are the children of God. This witness is not miraculous, but

in accordance with the ordinary operations of the mind.

This witness of the Spirit is with our spirit,—not in opposition to it, not in collision with it; not suspending the active powers of reason or will, not independent of the ordinary means of grace; but instructing in truth, comforting in sorrow, encouraging to duty, and confirming faith.

As there is no compulsion, and no sensible impulse in this witness, it can be known only in its internal or moral results. Observe the aspirations, the hopes, the joys, of the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. How is the carnal mind subdued! active duty is made easy, devout prayer is a source of comfort.

The state of mind, the ruling principle, the motives are widely different in saints from those in sinners.

If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is not his. Who and what are we? children or aliens?

XXXIII.

"HOLD FAST THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS." - 2 TIMOTHY I. 13.

OME do not wish to hear about sound doctrine, forms, confessions of faith, and catechisms. They profess to think that there is no need of them. They forget the Ten Commands, the Lord's Prayer, the expository sermon on the mount, the summary of the law given by our Lord in two commands. They forget that the apostle to the Gentiles made "Christ and him crucified" the burden of his preaching, and urged "repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," exhorting the Hebrews to leave behind the elementary principles of the oracles of God, such as "repentance from dead works, faith towards God, the doctrine of baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment," and admonishing Timothy "to hold fast the form of sound words."

It must be assumed, then, that we should

have such forms,—confessions in the churches, catechisms in our families. They are eminently useful to aid our memory and confirm our faith, especially with appropriate texts of Scripture.

These schedules of Christian doctrine and duty should be simple, concise, highly valued, and made familiar.

When there are sects and parties, visionary theories and changing winds of doctrine, these forms of sound words should be held fast. How? By committing them to memory, by reducing them to practice, by teaching them to our children, by publishing them to the world.

How mistaken are they who have no Christian creed and wish for none! They are surely ignorant or infidel, having no established principles, and tossed about with every wind or tide. Search and see. Know what you believe, and why you believe. "Hold fast the form of sound words." "Contend carnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints."

XXXIV.

"REJOICE INASMUCH AS YE ARE PARTAKERS OF THE SUF-FERINGS OF CHRIST; THAT, WHEN HIS GLORY SHALL BE REVEALED, YE MAY BE GLAD ALSO WITH EXCEED-ING JOY." —I PETER IV. 13.

ESUS was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. He was slandered, falsely accused, rejected, and crucified. He went about doing good, and all his miracles were benignant; yet his sufferings were frequent and intense, from the manger to the tomb. They were for right-eousness' sake, inflicted by apostate angels and wicked men.

Men often suffer in the ordinary course of divine discipline, and as punishments for their sins. Such sufferings do not, in their nature or design, partake of the sufferings of Christ. No. It is delusive to think that God will surely make us blessed in another world simply because we have suffered much in this world. Beware of this error. But

the saints to whom Peter wrote had suffered persecution and many evils for Christ's sake. They were partakers, so to speak, in his sufferings, and they would partake in his glory.

Yes, he had a glory in sure prospect when he should come in the clouds of heaven, with myriads of angels, to judge the world, and this glory would endure forever. In this glory all his saints would be partakers with him.

What a reward would this be! Who can comprehend its extent, duration, and value? Who should not be animated to duty, patient in suffering, sincere in piety, strong in faith?

Such was Peter's view of it. "Rejoice!"

They mistake who apostatize, or who despair, or who complain under present temptations and trials. We see the value of faith to sustain the soul.

Blessed are they who begin to rejoice now. What is our experience? Can we comply with the text?

XXXV.

"FOR SO AN ENTRANCE SHALL BE MINISTERED UNTO YOU ABUNDANTLY INTO THE EVERLASTING KINGDOM OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST." — II PETER I. II.

ESUS Christ, our Lord and Saviour, is at the head of a spiritual kingdom. Angels minister to him and honor him with their worship. But his subjects are chiefly the penitent and sanctified of our race. They to whom Peter addressed his letters belonged to this body. They had escaped the corruption of the world and embraced the promises. They were now exhorted to add to their faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity; in the assurance that they would then be fruitful in good works, and that an entrance would be ministered to them abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Some have no entrance to this kingdom, as they have no moral preparation and no

alliance to its head. Others obtain it as if with difficulty; they are saved as brands plucked from the fire. Others, as in the text, are represented to have an entrance ministered to them abundantly. The door is wide open. They are invited to come in as the blessed of the Lord.

Heaven is shadowed forth as a kingdom. Some are prepared for entrance. Others are unfit, not qualified. It is the work of life to prepare for an entrance into the glorious and blessed kingdom of our Lord, to dwell with him and all his saints. What are labor, self-denial, and persecution for the short hour of life, in comparison with the dignity and blessedness of that eternal state, which is faintly represented as a kingdom?

O ye ambitious aspirants after honor, title, and office, and ye who lay up golden treasure, so soon to be left on earth, seek with diligence a full entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

XXXVI.

"COME THOU AND ALL THY HOUSE INTO THE ARK." "AND THE LORD SHUT THEM IN." — GEN. vii. 1, 16.

LL the house or family were eight in number, — Noah and his wife, three one and their wives. These were connected with Noah, and these alone were saved from the deluge. The Lord shut the door of the ark behind them to ensure their safety during their perilous voyage. If they were not all believers, they enjoyed the instructions and prayers of Noah, and they derived temporal blessings from an alliance with him.

Thomas and Dorothy Burgess were pilgrims to this "mighty wilderness," surely as early as 1637. They were united with the church in Sandwich, at that date. Jacob, their son, and Mary Nye, his wife, were members of the same church. Ebenezer, his son, and Ebenezer, his son, or surely their wives, were early members of the church in Wareham. And

so was Prince, son of Ebenezer, Jr., — my honored father, and Martha Crowell, my beloved mother. Thus, so far as I know, my ancestors by the name of Burgess, for these five generations, both men and women, have been exemplary members of the church of Christ on earth, and were taken at their death into the ark above. Dear emblem of heaven, — a whole family in the ark!

Nor is this all. My five brothers and four sisters, with their husbands and wives, have, I believe, entered the celestial ark. My three little sons were early entrusted to the Saviour's arms, and my four surviving children promise to walk in the way of their believing ancestors. A whole family in the ark. O miracle of mercy! O sovereign, abounding grace!

What an honor and happiness is it to sustain such a relationship, to claim such an ancestry, to participate in such covenant mercy, to be remembered in so many prayers!

May God keep covenant with my children to the third and fourth generation.

XXXVII.

"I DO REMEMBER MY FAULTS THIS DAY." - GENESIS XII. 9.

HE narrative is simple and deeply impressive. How strangely are we made to remember our faults even in this world; how much more in the next! In the parable of Lazarus, our Lord represents Abraham as saying to the lost son of pleasure, "Son, remember."

Memory is a faculty of the mind, original, inherent, and indestructible as the soul itself. Memory will not be impaired but invigorated in the change of death. All that any one ever knew or did or suffered in life will go with him as the food of a perpetual memory into eternity. Amazing thought; and yet it must be so. How will the gratitude of the penitent be often kindled anew! And how will the anguish of the unforgiven sinner be intensified!

Son, remember thy sins,—thy pride, thy indulgence, thy abuse of goodness, thy neglect of the poor, thy contempt of God. Salvation was near, and thou wouldst not accept it. The door of mercy was opened, and thy sins held thee back.

Son, remember thy godly parents, thy faithful ministers, thy kind friends, — Bibles, Sabbaths, sermons, prayers.

Of the future and perpetual existence of memory, who can justly entertain a doubt? The intensely active and wide survey of memory who can dispute, when we think of its operations often in the departing hour?

What a channel of woe will memory be to the sinner forever! Reason will condemn; conscience will condemn; memory will condemn. In the day of judgment, and forever, every faculty of the soul will be on the Lord's side. Poor self-condemned sinner, he remembers his faults.

XXXVIII.

"ASK WHAT I SHALL GIVE THEE." - 2 CHRONICLES i. 7.

OMENTOUS question, — responsible answer. God asks his creature man, the little child, the young man, one in middle life, one in old age: "What shall I give thee?"

The sick man says, Health. The old man says, Youth and long life. The poor man says, Riches. The ambitious man says, Power, office, and honor. The vain girl says, Beauty. How various is the answer! and yet each may be sincere. Suppose that each one has his wish fulfilled. Health, youth, and long life are promised by Him who has infinite treasures to distribute. Beauty, wealth, and honor, are ensured by Him who paints the rose and the lily. And are they happy, - the aged, and the young, the covetous, the ambitious, and the vain? Perhaps not one of them all. They have mistaken the way to be happy. These cannot fill up the wants and aspirations of the soul.

Man is not an animal alone, or a creature of earth and time. He has a rational soul, and is born for eternity. "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom." "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God." "The favor of God is life, and his loving kindness is better than life." "What will it profit a man to gain the world and lose his soul? What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Solomon was young when he ascended the throne of Israel, — a populous, rich, and powerful kingdom. He held a religious festival, and offered many sacrifices. He slept and dreamed. The Lord, in vision, asked what he wished. He said, Wisdom to rule well. God was pleased that he did not ask riches, honor, long life, or the life of his enemies; but wisdom to rule well the Lord's people. He promised to Solomon wisdom, and everything great and good. Thus the name of Solomon comes down to our age rich in wisdom, wealth, and honor.

XXXIX.

"ACQUAINT NOW THYSELF WITH HIM, AND BE AT PEACE; THEREBY GOOD SHALL COME UNTO THEE." —JOB xxii. 21.

CQUAINT thyself with God,"—in respect to his being, attributes, and works, his principles of government, his doctrines of faith, revelations of truth, precepts of duty, promises and warnings,—by the study of his word, by reflection, by prayer. This knowledge is pure, sublime, elevating, useful.

"And be at peace." Be reconciled to his will, submissive to his government, obedient to his laws. Love him supremely. Be at peace in thy soul, having a good conscience. Hope in his mercy, rejoice in his salvation. Avert his displeasure; escape the condemnation of his law.

"Thereby good shall come unto thee."

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Health and prosperity; the blessings of Providence; assurance of mercy.

All other kinds of knowledge are low and of little value in comparison with this.

What an evidence is this of a deep and universal depravity, — that the knowledge of God is offensive to the natural heart! No unregenerate person desires the knowledge of God.

Here there is one evidence of a new heart, or regeneration, — Does one seek after God? Is one a student of the Bible? Does he treasure up divine truth in his memory?

How sad is the fact that in the family and school the knowledge of God is cast into the shade! Must our children live and die in ignorance of God?

XL.

"I WILL REPROVE THEE, AND SET THEM IN ORDER BEFORE THINE EYES." — PSALM 1. 21.

HE wicked man is reproved that he hates instruction, conspires with the thief, speaks falsely, slanders his brother. A few offences are named, as a specimen of many. While the Lord delays to punish, the sinner banishes the conviction of guilt. But the Lord says, "I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes."

He can do this in the application of his truth, by the chastisements of his Providence, and by the convincing power of his Spirit.

He will set their sins in order before their eyes in their uncounted number, in their chronological arrangement, and in their aggravated guiltiness.

Why will he do so? To awaken the slum-

bering, to convince the dormant conscience, to show them that they will surely be condemned in the approaching judgment; and, if possible, to lead them to repentance while the day of probation holds out.

Do your sins appear to be few or slight? God has not yet set your sins in order before your eyes. You are blind to guilt and danger, — vain and gay, — in health and prosperity. But this does not demonstrate that ye are not great sinners, and on the way to perdition.

Hear the narratives of good people. They were once like you. But the Lord reproved them and set their sins in order before their eyes; how multiplied in number, how black in guilt, how complicated one with another! They see themselves to be the chief of sinners.

How frightful will be the vision, when ye shall see yourselves in the light of truth and of eternity!

XLI.

"WHO IN THE HEAVEN CAN BE COMPARED UNTO THE LORD? WHO AMONG THE SONS OF THE MIGHTY CAN BE LIKENED UNTO THE LORD?" — PSALM lxxxix. 6. [Ex. xv. II; Deut. x. I7; Ps. xc. 2; Is. xi. 18.]

OD is supreme, eternal, infinite, immutable, incomprehensible, — not to be compared to any man or angel, however excellent in character or dignified in rank. He had no beginning and will have no end, from eternity to eternity the same. He is unlimited in knowledge, independent in power, and everywhere present. He is Creator and Lord of his own universe, — the sum of all perfection, and exalted above the comprehension of any finite mind. "His understanding is infinite." "Who by searching can find out God?"

The attributes or perfections of God are divided into the natural and the moral. The former are eternity, power, knowledge, universal presence, immutability, wisdom. The latter are benevolence, justice, goodness, mercy, and truth. The former pertain to his infinite nature; the latter to his moral character. The former can only be adored; the latter can be imitated by his rational creatures. Whatever excellence is found in any man or angel must be ascribed to God in an infinite degree. Thus power, knowledge, wisdom, goodness, compassion, are to be ascribed to God in infinite measure.

He, then, is to be acknowledged in all his works of power and skill. He is entitled to adoration and thanksgiving from his rational creatures, always and everywhere.

Impatience, distrust, rebellion, and blasphemy are inexpressibly criminal. To admire the majesty and beauty of his works, and yet to withhold the praise due to the Creator himself, betrays the atheism of our heart.

"Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord."

XLII.

"SEARCH ME, O GOD, AND KNOW MY HEART; TRY ME,
AND KNOW MY THOUGHTS; AND SEE IF THERE BE ANY
WICKED WAY IN ME, AND LEAD ME IN THE WAY
EVERLASTING." — PSALM CXXXIX. 23, 24.

O search" and "to try" are the same in import; and so are heart and thoughts. Most persons wish to be estimated by external deportment alone, and to allow no inquiry to be made into the plans and affections of the heart. Conscious of guiltiness, they are not willing that God or man, friend or enemy, should look within. Not so the Psalmist. He prays that the holy and omniscient God would search his inmost soul.

Why? to detect error, hypocrisy, or secret crime, that he might himself be admonished of it, be led to repentance, and reclaimed. He would not wish to dishonor God, or to live and die under a self-delusion. "Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men."

What was the great moral end of this search or trial of the heart? It was not simply detection of secret error or guiltiness; but that he might be truly converted and "led in the way everlasting." What is this way everlasting? How significant and comprehensive! It is the way of holiness and truth, which eternal wisdom has marked out; which reason and conscience will always approve; which a future eternity will justify; which will end in everlasting life.

Witness this honest sincerity. Who does not despise hypocrisy, whether in himself or in others?

Who is not alarmed at the thought of going to the tribunal of the judgment under a delusion? Who will not pray to be illuminated in the truth, to be convinced of any secret sin, to be led to repentance for everything wrong, and to be guided in the way everlasting?

Be honest in dealing with thyself. Self-examination is an imperative duty.

XLIII.

"WHITHER SHALL I GO FROM THY SPIRIT? OR WHITHER SHALL I FLEE FROM THY PRESENCE? IF I ASCEND UP INTO HEAVEN, THOU ART THERE; IF I MAKE MY BED IN HELL, BEHOLD, THOU ART THERE. IF I TAKE THE WINGS OF THE MORNING, AND DWELL IN THE UTTERMOST PARTS OF THE SEA, EVEN THERE SHALL THY HAND LEAD ME, AND THY RIGHT HAND SHALL HOLD ME." — PSALM CXXXIX. 7-10.

EAUTIFUL imagery, striking description, sublime doctrine,—the omnipresence of God! Who can comprehend or form any just conception of it? It is not an extension, like a material substance; nor is it a diffusion, like the light or a perfume.

God is a Spirit, and in all his infinite nature and attributes, in his power, wisdom, and benevolence, he is present everywhere. He occupies no place, he is excluded from no place. Wherever he works, there he is in every part of his created universe. He sustains and governs all things. He has a perfect knowledge of all things. He takes cognizance of all the words and acts of his rational and responsible creatures, and in due time he will make retribution to angels and men, good and bad, according to personal character.

Is there no escape from his presence, by sea or by land, in heaven or in hell? Let us not think for a moment that any change of place can avail anything to our advantage.

Is God ever present in every place? Let it overawe our volatile mind. Let our pride be abased. Let us fear to sin. Let us not be found in rebellion. Is God ever present in his power and in his wrath against the wicked? Let us deprecate his displeasure. Is he ever present in his love and mercy? Let it comfort us in danger, in suffering and in trouble, in sickness and in death.

XLIV.

"AND WE ARE NOT SAVED." - JEREMIAH VIII. 8.

ble opportunities are lost. Pastors and Christian friends are dead. But we are not saved. Why not? We are honest in our trade. We are moral in our habits. We are reverent, or not profane, in our speech. We have many serious thoughts on religious subjects. We are not infidel in our principles. We have a respect for the Sabbath and the ordinances of the gospel. We wish to be saved.

Why not be saved? Because we have no repentance for sin. We have no supreme love to God. Our heart is not right with God. We have loved ourselves and the world supremely. We have consulted our appetites and passions, and not the will of God. In our heart, in our speech, in our

whole deportment, our will, and not the law of our Maker, has been our standard.

We are not saved. And why not. We have thought religious duty to be gloomy, fit only for sickness, old age, or the dying hour. We have not called the Sabbath a delight, nor worship a grateful service. We have wished to postpone repentance to some more convenient season. We have complained of labors, cares, and disappointments, no time, many doubts, diversity of opinions.

We are not saved. We have made no preparation for it. We are not in a fit state of mind to participate in the employments or joys of heaven.

We are not saved. It is a matter of lamentation. We are not saved. We are in danger of perdition. Others are gathered into the granary, while we are not. Others have entered in to the feast, and the door is shut. Our sun is declining. "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."

XLV.

"THEY THAT BE WISE SHALL SHINE AS THE BRIGHTNESS
OF THE FIRMAMENT; AND THEY THAT TURN MANY TO
RIGHTEOUSNESS, AS THE STARS FOREVER AND EVER."

— DANIEL YI. 3.

OW bright is the firmament often when the stars in uncounted number shine forth! Such is human society when the people are wise. Such especially are they who turn many to righteousness. This appears to apply to parents, instructors, and preachers of the gospel. They may turn those to righteousness who are under their care, not by legal constraint, or by a spiritual agency in the soul, which is the peculiar work of God; but by sound teaching, by earnest persuasion, by holy example, by devout prayer.

As one sinner destroyeth much good, so one good man prevents much sin. The power of holy example is confessed. A prince or a prophet may be a great reformer. Hezekiah and Josiah were reforming kings in Judah. Elijah and John the Baptist were awakening preachers. Modern examples are not few. Some pastors of the churches and some apostles to the heathen might be named to illustrate the fact.

They are wise in different degrees, and shine with more or less brilliance. So they turn few or many to righteousness. Who can explain the secret causes of failure or success? There may be a vain ambition. Some are employed to sow the seed, and some to reap the harvest. God is sovereign.

What witness have we to our wisdom, whether personally, or in our relation as parents, instructors, or pastors of churches? Can we appeal to our success? Can we say, Here, Lord, are thy servants, and here are the spiritual children whom thou hast given us?

Do we begin to shine in this world, and shall we shine with more brilliance forever? The future recognition of the saints is sure.

XLVI.

"WHEREWITH SHALL I COME BEFORE THE LORD, AND BOW MYSELF BEFORE THE HIGH GOD? SHALL I COME BEFORE HIM WITH BURNT OFFERINGS, WITH CALVES OF A YEAR OLD? WILL THE LORD BE PLEASED WITH THOUSANDS OF RAMS OR WITH TEN THOUSANDS OF RIVERS OF OIL? SHALL I GIVE MY FIRST-BORN FOR MY TRANSGRESSION, THE FRUIT OF MY BODY FOR THE SIN OF MY SOUL?" — MICAH vi. 6, 7.

NFANTICIDE in religious worship is a horrible act of superstition. Yet to this abjectness the human mind has been reduced in its ignorance and anguish. The idea seems to have been that God will appreciate most highly that which is most dear to us. A child, a first-born child, the fruit of my body, a part of myself, this most beloved thing will be most beloved of God. Let this be offered in sacrifice to make atonement for my sin. It is a horrible alternative. Moloch was surely the image of Satan.

It is one step higher in the scale of superstition to believe that an offering will be

most pleasing to God which is most costly to us. Let the sacrifice be the calf or the lamb, not one only but thousands, not lean but flowing in rivers of oil, as God will be proportionately honored and pleased. So the dying sinner will build a splendid church or burn a rich perfume. Miserable error! Is the Most High hungry for flesh, or thirsty for wine? Are not the beasts of the field his, and the cattle on a thousand hills? Wherewith then shall we come before the Lord? "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Worthless are our many offerings and our costly sacrifices without piety in the heart. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." "Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord." "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." The rich man in his approach to God has no advantage over the poor man. Know, O man, wherewith to approach thy Maker!

XLVII.

"AND LO, I AM WITH YOU ALWAY, EVEN TO THE END OF THE WORLD." — MATT. xxviii. 20.

HIS was the Master's farewell promise to his disciples. In its spirit and truthfulness it extends to all his people, even in any distant land, and to the latest age.

How is he with them? Not by his word or doctrine; this would not be peculiar to them. Not by his essential presence as God; this, too, is common to all men. But by his supernatural gifts, by the grace of the Spirit, by the care of his watchful providence, to sustain in infirmity, to comfort in trouble, to protect in danger, to supply in want, to succeed in labor, and to reward in death. He will be with them in all time, in all places, and in all company; when weary, when persecuted, when forsaken, when dying.

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He assures them of his love, of his watchful inspection, of his compassionate interposition. He has ample power; he is faithful to his promise; he is tenderly affectionate. In his human person he was leaving them, to be seen no more in the flesh; but in his official character, as the Mediator and as the Redeemer of his people, he was to be exalted in power and glory to accomplish the remaining part of the work which was given him to do.

Let us rejoice in his exaltation. It was expedient for the disciples that he should go away. He did not leave them comfortless. There was both the promised Spirit to dwell with them, and there was the assurance of his perpetual presence.

Is Christ with us in this late age and in this distant land? Can we testify to his truth?

XLVIII.

"HE THAT SHALL BLASPHEME AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST HATH NEVER FORGIVENESS; BUT IS IN DANGER OF ETERNAL DAMNATION; BECAUSE THEY SAID, HE HATH AN UNCLEAN SPIRIT." — MARK iii. 29, 30.

HE Scribes could not well deny that the miracles of Christ were real and marvellous; but they were not willing to confess his divine grace and power, and therefore said that he conspired with Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. Jesus replied that such a representation was absurd and criminal, - absurd, as a house or kingdom divided against itself could not stand, and Satan would not cast out Satan; criminal, as it ascribed to the devil the peculiar works of God's mercy. Such guilt was extreme, a blasphemy against the Holy Ghost which hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation; "because they said, he hath an unclean spirit."

We see, then, here what is the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, or the unforgiven sin which exposes one to eternal damnation. It is the ascribing to the devil the peculiar and gracious works of God.

This sin is malignant; it is impious; it is doing dishonor to the Spirit; it cuts off from the last hope of mercy.

It may not be possible for man to define, within precise limits, the unpardonable sin, nor is it important to do so. It may not be possible for any one to know whether he has committed this specific sin, or not. Woe to the presumptuous one, who rushes to the verge of perdition!

They who intentionally resist the Spirit, or blaspheme the Spirit, or profanely or impiously trifle with the gracious work of the Spirit, are surely not beyond the danger of this guiltiness.

There is a Beelzebub, there are unclean spirits, there is a sin which hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation. Oh, trifle not with eternal damnation!

XLIX.

"AND THERE WAS A CLOUD THAT OVERSHADOWED THEM,
AND A VOICE CAME OUT OF THE CLOUD, SAYING,
THIS IS MY BELOVED SON; HEAR HIM." — MARK ix. 7.

HE place was the high and solitary mountain. The company present were Jesus, the three principal disciples, Moses, and Elijah. Jesus was changed in aspect. His apparel became white and brilliant. Moses and Elijah appeared in vision, and talked with Jesus about his approaching death. A cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my beloved Son; hear him."

Jesus is the beloved Son of God, — not an angel, not a man only. The testator is God himself. The voice was supernatural. It came down from the overshadowing cloud. It was heard by a competent number of witnesses. "This voice which came from heaven, we heard, when we were with him in the holy

mount;" "A voice from the excellent glory: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

This voice was heard, understood, and retained in memory. The first testimony was to his nature, rank, dignity, identity. "To which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son? Let all the angels of God worship him?"

But what was the great declaration? "Hear him." This was not a solitary charge, but often repeated. He came as a teacher. He was fully inspired. He was endued with the gifts and grace of the Spirit without measure. He was the Word of God, the Light of the world, the Prophet of prophets.

"Hear him." He spake with authority. His teaching is full, true, final, — expounding the Scriptures, completing the revelation of God to man. Let Jew and Gentile repeat the monition, "Hear him." Let heaven and earth from age to age echo the voice from the cloud, "Hear him; hear him;" he is the "beloved Son of God."

"WHEN YE SHALL HAVE DONE ALL THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE COMMANDED YOU, SAY, WE ARE UNPROFITABLE SERVANTS; WE HAVE DONE THAT WHICH WAS OUR DUTY TO DO."—LUKE XVII. 10.

S God is our Creator, we are his property to employ and to dispose of. Our powers and possessions are his gifts, derived from him, preserved by him. Our time is assigned by his sovereign will, and it will expire at his pleasure.

What can we do to impose an obligation on him, to demand his thanks, or merit his favor? Nay, we must confess that we are unprofitable servants. That is the extent of it. We may be industrious and dutiful. We may improve well all our time and powers; we may regulate our hearts, speech, and conduct by the perfect law, and yet at the best we have only done our duty. Can we demand a reward? Nay, we are unprofitable servants.

How surely are they in error who think that all the blessings of life, ten thousand times ten thousand, flow to them on the ground of their goodness, being well deserved and truly merited, only a part of their well-earned compensation! How surely are they in error who think to enter into heaven because they have served so well, and done so much to please and honor God!

How absurd is the idea of keeping an account with God, intending to demand so much reward for so much service!

"Doth the master thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? No. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do."

The confession is humiliating, but just.

LI.

"AND I APPOINT UNTO YOU A KINGDOM, AS MY FATHER HATH APPOINTED UNTO ME; THAT YE MAY EAT AND DRINK AT MY TABLE IN MY KINGDOM, AND SIT ON THRONES, JUDGING THE TWELVE TRIBES OF ISRAEL."

— LUKE XXII 29, 30.

HE reward of the disciples, for their fidelity and perseverance to their Lord, is here set forth under two shades of imagery: The one is blessedness, the other is honor or exaltation; the one is a royal feast, the other is a kingdom.

Their fidelity was imperfect, as they all fled in the hour of danger; but they were not all traitors and apostates. Others had followed Him for a time, and then withdrawn. They enjoyed his miracles, but were displeased with his doctrines. But the disciples were true, sincere, endured temptations, renounced the world.

Christ was soon to finish his earthly trial,

and was then to be exalted in heaven. The Father had appointed to him a kingdom as his just reward. He, in his turn, appointed to them a similar reward, a participation with himself in the blessedness of the feast and in the honor of his kingdom. "Ye shall eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." The twelve tribes included the whole nation. After the reign of Solomon, the nation was divided into two kingdoms. This former union should be restored to infinitely more than its ancient splendor. All earthly imagery fails to illustrate the Messiah's reign.

To sit at the royal table, and to sit in judgment on the royal throne, are all that human imagery can set forth. The robe, the sceptre, the crown, are only appendages. All the saints, however lowly and poor in this world, will participate in this dignity and bliss forever.

LII.

"JESUS, TURNING UNTO THEM, SAID, DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM, WEEP NOT FOR ME, BUT WEEP FOR YOUR
SELVES AND FOR YOUR CHILDREN." — LUKE XXIII. 28

HE devout women were last at the cross and first at the tomb. A great company followed Him from the hall of Pilate to the place of crucifixion. Among these were women who bewailed and lamented Him. He was touched by their sympathy, and wished to turn it into a profitable channel. Their tears for Him were unavailing; but it would be well that they should prepare for their days of grief.

Mark His tender address. Some of them were from Galilee, a remote part of the land; perhaps strangers and in humble condition. But they exhibited a love for Him, and a tender regard for His sufferings, so severe and so unjust. He calls them all "Daughters of Jerusalem,"—the royal and holy city.

What did he say? "Weep not for me." They wept much; they made loud lamentation. It was for Him, — an exalted personage, a wise teacher, a faithful friend, a compassionate worker of miracles, a Saviour from sin and perdition. They thought that there was much reason to weep for Him. He viewed it otherwise. It was a part of the divine plan, predicted, essential, and now to be accomplished. "Weep not for me."

For whom then might they weep? "Weep for yourselves and for your children"—the infants, the little children, the next generation. Some of them would witness the desolation of the city and the dispersion of the people. How tenderly does he refer to the peculiar sufferings of woman in that dread day of flight! Pray that it be not in the winter, and the like.

Witness the humanity of Christ. Do not waste strength in useless grief. Admire the affectionate piety of woman.

LIII.

"IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE ARE MANY MANSIONS; IF IT
WERE NOT SO, I WOULD HAVE TOLD YOU. I GO TO
PREPARE A PLACE FOR YOU." — JOHN xiv. 2.

EAVEN is here shadowed forth as a house, the house of the Father, the home of the blessed angels and of the just made perfect.

It has many mansions or apartments. This may indicate its spaciousness, or wide extent in height or measurement. The home of myriads of happy beings must not be considered as narrow, mean, or unattractive. God, in his grandeur and wisdom, has invested it with whatever is majestic, or beautiful, or lovely.

Its many mansions may indicate diversity in place, and diversity in honor or in degree of blessedness. Let this assurance suffice, that it is the Father's house, and that it is ample in its accommodations. "I go to prepare a place for you." This is addressed to the disciples; but, like the prayer for them, it will extend to all who are like them, or who will ever believe in Christ.

He is gone into the heavens. Mark his ascension. He is not idle, forgetful, or false. He has power, benevolence, and truthfulness. He will fulfil his promise.

He will come again in dispensations of judgment and of mercy. Especially will he come in majesty and glory to judge the world.

He will then receive his people to himself, to his presence. Where he is, there they shall be. Who will not wish to obtain a place in some humble mansion in the Father's house? Let not the door be shut.

Despair not, ye devout inquirers. Backslide not, ye weary pilgrims. Be not engrossed with honor, riches, or pleasure, ye travellers to eternity.

LIV.

"IN THE WORLD YE SHALL HAVE TRIBULATION; BUT BE OF GOOD CHEER: I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD." —
JOHN XVI. 33.

HE last discourses of Christ with his disciples are full of consolation. The memorable prayer, the promise of the Comforter, the pledge to take them finally to dwell with Himself, cannot be forgotten. They were to remain on earth for a time, to suffer trial and persecution, like the prophets in old time. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." He did not promise rest, peace, and prosperity. No. Rather trouble, conflict, temptation. But be patient, trustful, hold fast the faith. "Be of good cheer." Be full of hope and joy in the prospect of the future reward.

Especially, bear it in memory that "I have overcome the world."

- 1. The prince of this world, Satan, the great adversary of our race, all his host of fallen spirits, and all wicked men, who may tempt, ensnare, and endeavor to destroy. He won a full conquest over them all.
- 2. Errors, false doctrines, false philosophers, poets, and prophets; scoffers, warriors, kings, infidels and apostates.
- 3. The depraved passions and appetites of wicked men, the lust of the eye, the lusts of the flesh and the pride of life.

The world, the flesh, and the devil were baffled, trodden down, and cast behind. All that could interrupt the good man in his heavenly race was removed.

"I have overcome the world." As he had secured a victory, so should his disciples.

Think of the Captain of your salvation. What are his plans and promises? What are his resources and means of help? All nature is under his control. The angels are his ministers to the saints.

LV.

"AFTER THAT, HE WAS SEEN BY ABOVE FIVE HUNDRED BRETHREN AT ONCE; OF WHOM THE GREATER PART REMAIN UNTO THIS PRESENT, BUT SOME ARE FALLEN ASLEEP."— 1 CORINTHIANS xv. 6.

OW peaceful is the death of believers! They are fallen asleep. Even if they fall by martyrdom, they may, with Stephen, fall asleep amid enrapturing visions of the Lord Jesus.

Those who were honored with this long and satisfactory interview with Christ were brethren, — not Pharisees or Sadducees. We hardly knew that there were so many as five hundred true and faithful brethren in all the land; much less did we know that they could leave home and business to assemble together on a distant mountain.

The place was designated. It was a mountain in Galilee, probably the same which witnessed the transfiguration. The time was fixed

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without dispute. The opportunity was ample for mutual intercourse.

The object of this interview was the full conviction of these five hundred brethren that Jesus was surely risen from the dead, and that they might bear witness to this great event.

Nor is it hardly less than a miracle, that after so long a period as about thirty years the apostle should declare, "Of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep." As if he had protested to the Corinthians that there were hundreds of credible witnesses then alive who had been conversant with Christ during the forty days after the resurrection. If human testimony could prove any fact, here is sufficient testimony.

If now Christ rose from the dead, as he surely did, then a resurrection is possible, and his resurrection is a pledge of the rising again of all his people. What further evidence can we wish? To say nothing of the women early at the tomb, there are Peter, James, the eleven apostles, and the more than five hundred brethren, who were witnesses.

LVI.

"IF ANY MAN BE IN CHRIST, HE IS A NEW CREATURE;
OLD THINGS ARE PASSED AWAY; BEHOLD, ALL THINGS
ARE BECOME NEW." — 2 CORINTHIANS V. 17.

HAT is it to be in Christ? This union is compared to the branch as united to the vine, to the union of the members to the head of the body, and the stones in the building to the corner-stone. It is not a physical or personal union, nor is it a human or social union. It is a spiritual and moral union, — in principles, in love, in faith and obedience.

In what sense is he who is in Christ a new creature? Not in body, — in stature, features, members, and organs he is the same. Not by the addition of any new faculty; not by a change of lineage, sect, or party; not by a reformation of habits, or by a renunciation of vices alone; not by the adoption of a new creed, or by baptism, or professions, or visi-

ble ordinances. But he is new in his conviction of truth, in his repentance for sin, in his faith in the Redeemer, in his affections and purposes, in his hope and joy in the great end and duty of life.

How do old things pass away? This is known by experience. He comes into a new world. The pursuits of avarice, of pride, and sensual pleasure are relinquished. Wealth, honor, and show lose their attractions. New friends, new motives of action, new objects of life are introduced. This change is compared to waking from sleep, to rising from the dead, to a second birth, to a new creation.

Other grounds of distinction are done away. Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, bond or free, honorable or despised, it differs not. In a union to Christ these differences are forgotten. They are on an equality in him. Learned or ignorant in the science of the world, they are illuminated in him. "Behold, all things are become new!"

LVII.

"OF WHOM THE WHOLE FAMILY IN HEAVEN AND EARTH
IS NAMED."— EPHESIANS III. 15.

WEET home! The domestic relation is intimate and tender. Much of the happiness of life flows from this union. God sets the solitary in families and leads his people as a flock. Without these social and moral bonds, human beings are so selfish and passionate that they would hardly be able to live together. Yet, in the pursuit of business or pleasure, the members of a family are often widely dispersed on the ocean or on the land.

Christian believers are compared to a family. They are united in Christ their common Head, from whom they derive their name. They differ in age, in measure of intelligence, in civil condition, in immediate ancestry, in lan guage and color, but they are one family in Christ. They are divided by rivers, mountains, and oceans; by civil governments, con-

tinents, and islands; but they are one family in Christ. Even more, they are the living men and women of this generation, and the dead of former generations,—a part in heaven, and a part still on earth,—yet they are one family in Christ.

Marvellous and blessed union! They were imperfect in this world. They loved and served each other very imperfectly. They were separated by doctrinal distinctions, by forms of ecclesiastical government, by modes of administering ordinances, but they are one family in Christ.

Woe to those who slander this family; who introduce strife into it; who divide it into sects and parties!

Happy are they who consult its order and peace; who rejoice in its prosperity and enlargement; who contribute to its intelligence and sanctity!

In dying, the believer removes from one part of the family to the other; from the few on earth to the countless multitude in heaven.

LVIII.

"WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING." — PHILIPPIANS II. 12.

ALVATION relates to the soul, its safety, its sanctity, its final deliverance from sin and perdition.

This epistle was written to the saints in Christ Jesus who were resident at Philippi, including the bishops and deacons. In the eye of charity they were truly Christian believers; yet they had a salvation to work out, nor were they safe if they were not doing it with fear and trembling.

This teaches that salvation, as to the state of the soul, is a progressive work, and not instantaneous and complete at once. It begins in conversion or regeneration, and it advances in sanctification. No perfection is attained in this disciplinary period of our existence.

It teaches, too, that this salvation is a work in which we are voluntary and active. We are not passive machines. We are not religous by compulsion or constraint. We are active both in the beginning and in the prosecution of this work. We repent, believe, and obey. We think and pray, and do works meet for repentance. We renounce sin, shun bad company, avoid temptation, resist the devil, and persevere in active obedience. Faith, submission, and prayer are active exercises.

But here is a grave difficulty. We have by nature no heart to engage in this work. Alas! too true. But the words following the text are, "It is God who worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Blessed assurance! Who will not work, strong in the strength of God, wise in his wisdom, full of his grace and truth? "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

"Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." "BUT I WOULD NOT HAVE YOU TO BE IGNORANT, BRETHREN, CONCERNING THEM WHO ARE ASLEEP, THAT YE SORROW NOT, EVEN AS OTHERS, WHO HAVE NO HOPE."—

1 THESSALONIANS IV. 13.

O be asleep, in the sense of the text, is to be in the state of the dead. These were believers, or Christian brethren. Surviving friends indulged in sorrow, excessive and unavailing, like the heathen who have no correct knowledge or good hope beyond the grave. This ignorance and this deep grief for the dead in Christ did not become intelligent believers. The apostle, therefore, briefly instructs and admonishes them, expressing his regret to see them like the heathen in their deep sorrow for departed friends.

Believers die a natural death, like others, whether by accident or disease. Christ did not pray that his disciples should live here always, nor did he save them from a violent death.

Believers feel sorrow when Christian friends die. It is a common and humane

sentiment, proper and useful. Why? Loss of company, tie of affection broken, absence felt. Jesus groaned and wept at the grave of Lazarus.

But Christian believers should not sorrow like the heathen, who have no hope. Why not? Because they have hope. Their departed friends live in a better, more perfect, and exalted state. They will meet again. They are not extinct, not annihilated, not unconscious. They will meet again. They have only gone before. It is always a gain to the believer to die and to be with Christ, which is in itself far better. The body is laid aside, but the spirit retains its immortal powers.

Besides, the resurrection of the dead is always a consoling truth, peculiar to the Christian system.

Let us not "be ignorant" ourselves, nor let others remain so.

Wipe away your tears, ye saints, when Christians die. Such is our blessed Saviour's will.

LX.

"BE YE FOLLOWERS OF THEM WIIO THROUGH FAITH AND
PATIENCE INHERIT THE PROMISES."—HEBREWS vi. 12.

HERE are promises, or things promised.

These do not relate to earth and time.

They are spiritual, not natural, — invisible, not within the reach of our senses.

Things which were once matters of promise become a positive inheritance. When the state of probation is completed, the reward of inheritance is then bestowed. The trial is short, the conflict is soon past, and the inheritance, when once secured, will abide forever. It is incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading, reserved in heaven for the saints.

It becomes an inheritance, not by purchase, not by merit, but by faith in the great Redeemer, and by patient endurance in well-doing to the end. This faith is a spiritual grace, which begins in regeneration, and is made per-

fect in a complete sanctification. We read of the spirits of just men made perfect. Blessed company, — not few in number, not the subjects of conflict and temptation, of sin and sorrow. Blessed throng, — holy patriarchs, true prophets, martyred apostles, thousands and thousands, whom no man can number.

Be ye followers of such. Their faith was not a cunningly devised fable. Nor was their patience an idle dream. They fought a good fight, they ran the race with perseverance, they kept the faith, a crown of glory was laid up for them in heaven. Be ye followers of them in the imitation of their example, in the adherence to their principles, in the culture of their spirit.

Oh, blessed thought, all the redeemed people of God will constitute one body, knowing and known! They were here pilgrims and strangers; they will there be fellow-citizens.

LXI.

"AND THE LORD SAID UNTO CAIN, WHERE IS ABEL THY BROTHER? AND HE SAID, I KNOW NOT. AM I MY BROTHER'S KEEPER?" — GENESIS IV. 9.

AIN was guilty of fratricide. In malice and envy he killed his brother. The sacrifice of Abel was accepted of God, while the offering of Cain was not approved. When he had committed the bloody deed, God said to him, "Where is Abel, thy brother?" He answered, "I know not." How easy it is to tell a lie in the wish to conceal the truth! Thus crime is added to crime. Cain defied God to find the victim. The answer is, "What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground." How often has the battle-field drunk up the brother's blood! Follow the steps of the assassin in the dark night. He thinks that God will not see. "Am I my brother's keeper?" Yes. And God will hold thee responsible for thy unfaithfulness or neglect. "Thou shalt not kill." The life and welfare of thy brother are committed to thee in trust. In childhood or in old age, on the ocean or on the land, thou hast a duty to preserve thy brother. Is he poor? provide for him. Is he hungry? feed him. Is he naked? clothe him. Is he in danger? protect him. Is he in prison? visit him. Is he sick? nurse him. Every man is thy brother, and these are fragments of thy duty to him. His life, health, and safety are thine to keep. If thou slay, injure, or neglect thy brother, thou art guilty. Cain had committed the greatest crime against his brother, and —

[This meditation was Dr. Burgess' last effort with the pen. Overpowered by great weakness and suffering, he paused in the midst of an unfinished sentence. Five days later, Dec. 5, 1870, he fell asleep in Jesus.

The injury referred to by him in the Eighteenth Meditation was received on the fourteenth of March, — the forty-ninth anniversary of his installation as Pastor.]

"BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH, AND I WILL GIVE THEE A CROWN OF LIFE."









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